

10. School Safety Interviews: In-depth case studies

The *School Safety Interviews: In-depth case studies* were conducted with 16 Arizona public schools between December 1999 and March 2000. One principal and two teachers were interviewed at each of the sixteen schools. One additional staff was also interviewed at each school from the list of Aides, Bus drivers, Counselors, Heads of Security, and School Resource Officers. Therefore, 4 staff members were interviewed per school, amounting to 64 interviewees. Further details on the sample and interview protocol are available in Appendices 2, 3, and 4.

The interviews were transcribed and exported to N5, the latest version of the NUD*IST (Analysis of Non-numerical Unstructured Data by Indexing Searching and Theorizing) software for qualitative data analysis, where the information was coded and analyzed.

The results from the interviews have been summarized in this section. The results are discussed based on the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview process. The themes are as follows.

School themes

- School physical structure
- Student commute and crime
- Teacher involvement and school safety
- Role of teacher awareness
- Teacher time with students
- Monetary resources for school safety
- Information exchange in school
- Legal aspects of school safety issues
- Lagging practices in school safety
- Issues pertaining to Special Education students
- Successful practices for school safety
- Successful training for school safety
- Role of leadership
- Positive student environment and school safety

Matrix display of major safety issues by school type

Student themes

- Student crime
 - Assaults
 - Deaths
 - Fights
 - Gangs
 - Hate crimes
 - Hazing
 - Substance Abuse
 - Thefts
 - Graffiti and Vandalism
 - Weapons
- Matrix display of student crimes by school type
- Student behavior and school violence
- Trigger points for school violence

Community themes

- Community crime
- Community socioeconomic factors
- Community psychosocial factors
- Community collaborations
- Television, media and student behavior

Parent themes

- Parental involvement at home
- Parental involvement in school

Interview section discussion

It becomes evident from the *School Safety Circle of Influence* diagram below that the schools' policies, programs, practices, physical structure, and teachers are factors internal to the school that determine school safety. These are the only factors that are internal to the school and within fairly complete control of schools. It is these factors that can be reformed and adapted to meet the end result of school safety.

School safety is also determined to a very large extent by students, their criminal and other behaviors. Students in turn wear the dual hat of external and internal factors. They are external factors because they are part of the community and are internal factors because they are part of the school and can be disciplined to a certain extent through school policies.

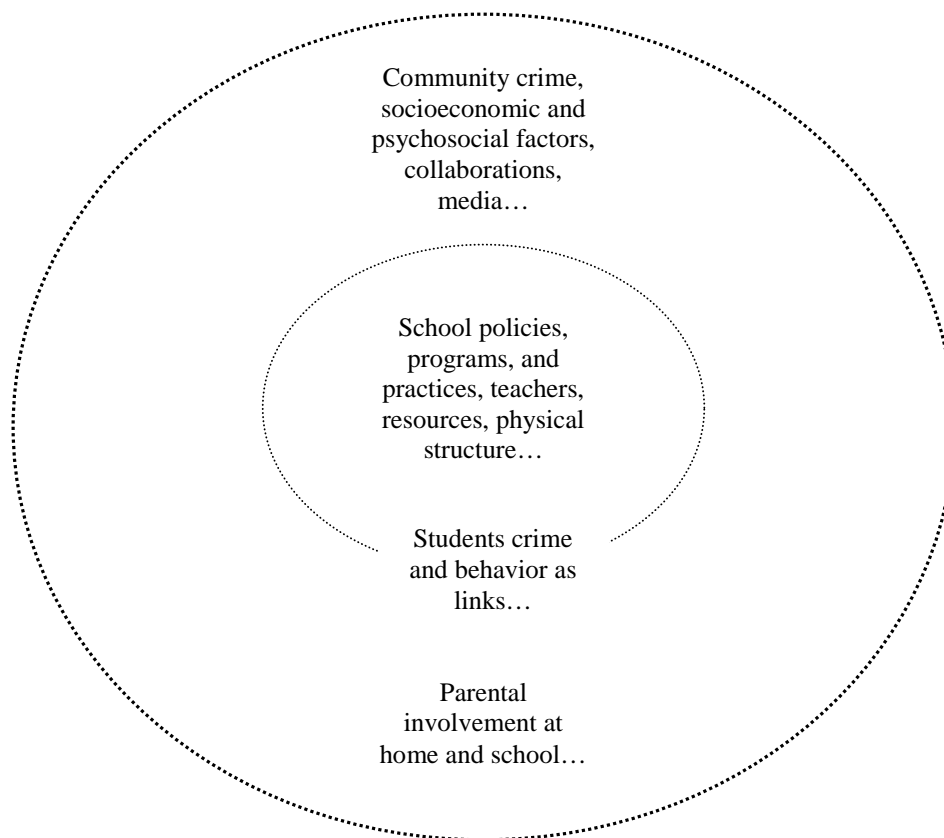
Many respondents highlighted that, generally speaking, community factors, like crime, socioeconomic, psychosocial, and collaborative factors, have a very crucial role to play in school violence. They perceived that schools are an element of the society and experience any symptoms thereof. The influence diagram below illustrates this point.

It can be noted from the diagram that parental factors like involvement at home and in school are also external factors that influence school safety.

Although schools can not control external factors like community and parents it is very crucial for schools to be aware of them because school safety is couched in them. However, schools can control factors that are internal to them like policies, programs, and procedures pertaining to teachers, school physical structure, internal resource allocation, etc. This is the only aspect of school safety that is within control of schools to a large extent. The section on schools will discuss at length details pertaining to the same.

The interview section of the study will first provide a detailed discussion pertaining to community and parental factors and will discuss their role in school safety. This will be followed by information on student factors. All this information will provide a background for an exhaustive discussion on school factors and school safety.

School Safety Circle of Influence



Note that the interview protocols for the in-depth interviews were adapted from the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools, a national study from the U.S. Department of Education. Adapting the national study will allow for meaningful comparisons between Arizona and national results. The national results will be available for comparison in December 2001 at www.ed.gov.